

BOROUGH OF CHARD. ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Acting Deputy Medical Officer of Health
For the Year ending December 31st, 1918.

To the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors
of the Borough of Chard.

GENTLEMEN,

In concluding my term as Deputy for Dr. Mence, the Medical Officer of Health for Chard Borough, I have the honour of presenting to you a fourth Annual Report—that for 1918.

STAFF.

In the absence of Mr. Hearn, on Military Service, Mr. Carter was kindly allowed by the Rural District Council to give part of his time to the duties of Sanitary Inspector for the Borough and he was assisted by Mr. A. Sidwick and the usual outdoor staff.

POPULATION.

The population of the Borough at the middle of the year was estimated at 3,804 for civilians, only, and 4,262 to comprise civilians and the portion of the military belonging to Chard. The deaths among the soldiers not being included in my list of deaths, the former number is used in estimating the death rate while the latter number is taken for estimating the birth rate.

Births.—The number of births registered during the year, after correction (on account of some mothers coming to Chard for their confinements only and some Chardians being confined elsewhere), is 65, making a nett birth rate of 15.25 per 1,000 population.

There were two deaths of infants aged 12 months or under, making an infantile mortality of 30.77 per 1,000 births. Of these two deaths, one took place at the age of two weeks owing to a congenital defect, while the other was due to whooping cough complicated by broncho pneumonia.

Deaths.—The total deaths registered were 58, but when corrected for inward and outward transfers only 52, giving a death rate of 13.67 per 1,000 population. The death rate is happily still under the birth rate, but this does not allow for mortalities among our soldiers.

The heaviest local mortality was due to Tubercle in one form or another. Owing to an epidemic, Influenza plus Pneumonia, singly or together, between them accounted for nearly as many, namely 12. The former, Tubercle, like the poor, is always with us, while the latter, Influenza, happily is an exceptional visitor, at least in its severe form. Tubercle, we are apt to take as a matter of course, Influenza appals us. This attitude is not conducive to the best results and we must combine with all our powers to fight the tubercular disease, and prevention is always better than cure and particularly so here. As the infection in this complaint is especially powerful in childhood it is sad to realize that much of the cows milk used in this country contains living Tubercle bacilli. An eminent physician says "Cows milk has destroyed hecatombs of children through tuberculosis." if through disease of the mother the baby cannot be breast fed, sterilization of the cows milk either by Pasteurization or boiling is advisable. Dried milk and condensed milk are safer in this respect though they lack valuable qualities of the fresh article.

Further the best possible housing conditions are imperative, healthy and well ventilated bed, living, and work rooms, a sufficiency of suitable food and of outdoor exercise. As regards suitable food systematic education of the prospective mothers during later school life is very desirable. One would not underrate either, the importance of health of mind leading to a clean healthy life governed by prudence.

Apart from tubercle, the notifiable diseases were few in number with no deaths. One case each of Erysipelas, Enteric Fever, and Measles, with two of Scarlet Fever comprise the list. Whooping Cough in the earlier part of the year and Mumps in the latter part were rather prevalent, but are not notifiable. Pneumonia was not notifiable last year. Twenty houses or parts thereof have been disinfected after cases of infectious disease.

The Isolation Hospital arrangements for small-pox remain as in former years

DRAINAGE.

The drainage of 6 houses was entirely reconstructed and many minor defects remedied. The sewers were periodically inspected and flushed. No defects were recorded. The sewage disposal works are satisfactory and no pollution results therefrom.

WATER SUPPLY.

This continues unsatisfactory. The present public supply, besides being only partial, shows contamination (which is rendered innocuous by chlorination of all the water)—not an ideal state of affairs. Serious effort is now being made to get a new supply, but the after effects of the war make the matter very difficult.

The town is much indebted to Mrs. Cook for her kindness in allowing the water supply to be augmented as required from the well of the Snowdon Collar Works.

House refuse is collected once a week and tipped outside the Borough.

MILK.

The milk supply has been on much the same lines as before, but the scarcity of the article in the country generally has had its effect in the local supply both in price and quantity owing to the good terms offered to dairymen by the neighbouring butter factories.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

The slaughter houses were periodically inspected. On three occasions tuberculous carcasses were reported by butchers, examined and condemned.

HOUSING.

No new houses were erected during the year. No special inspections of those existing were made under the Housing Act, 1909, and so none were condemned as unfit for habitation and none closed. No cases of overcrowding were dealt with during the year. Eleven ordinary inspections of dwelling houses were made and several minor defects discovered and remedied. The shortage of houses is acute, and overcrowding is known to exist, but there it remains. Since the return of the Borough Surveyor and Sanitary Inspector from active service, rapid progress has been made with the housing scheme, which will provide 52 additional houses. The complete scheme is being submitted to the L.G.B. almost immediately (May, 1919). Building operations are particularly difficult at present owing to the high cost of labour of all kinds, and hence of materials which in the long run are produced through labour and priced accordingly.

The State arrangements to keep rents down, below their relative values, bring the impossibility of remedying things by the usual private enterprise. The State has no Alladin's lamp to bring its desires into existence miraculously, and we must each realize that such things can only be really righted by increased production on the part of all. This may possibly be by improved methods of production leading to greater results in the same or lesser time or by harder work in the shortened hours of labour.

VACCINATION STATISTICS.

The number of children born in Chard Borough during the year 1918=66.

Those successfully vaccinated	...	41
Died unvaccinated	...	2
Conscientious objections	...	16
Removed to other districts	...	3
Postponed on account of illness	...	4

66

Since the main part of this report was written Dr. W. E. Mence, our late Medical Officer of Health, has, I much regret to say, died from disease brought about mainly if not entirely through service in the late war. He was not well when he left Constantinople for this country and was rapidly losing weight, but attributed his illness to dysentery, and hoped for fairly speedy recovery and resumption of his duties among us.

I am indebted to Mr. Hearne for collecting the records of last year's sanitary work.

I am, Mr. Mayor and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,
ROBERT SUTHERLAND, M.B., Ch.B.

CAUSES OF DEATH IN CHARD BOROUGH.

Causes of Death.	Males.	Females.
(Civilians only) All Causes	24	29
Whooping Cough	1	1
Influenza	4	2
Pulmonary tuberculosis	3	6
Tuberculous meningitis	—	1
Other tuberculous diseases	1	2
Cancer, malignant disease	1	2
Organic heart disease	2	4
Pneumonia (all forms)	4	2
Other respiratory diseases	1	—
Appendicitis and typhlitis	1	—
Cirrhosis of liver	1	—
Congenital debility, &c.	1	—
Violence, apart from suicide	1	—
Other defined diseases	3	9

Deaths of infants under 1 year of age

..	2	—
Total births	35	30
Legitimate	32	30
Illegitimate	3	—

Population for Birth-rate .. 4,262
,, ,, Death rate ... 3,804

